

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Robert C. Byrd, chairman, and Ted Stevens, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey,

ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 10.

Interview With Allison Payne of WGN-TV in Chicago January 9, 2001

Accomplishments in the Final Days

Ms. Payne. Congratulations, sir.

The President. Thank you. Hi.

Ms. Payne. I understand you're working just as hard these last few weeks as you have been the last 8 years. What's driving you?

The President. Well, I get paid until January the 20th. I think I ought to show up for work. Also, I think there's a lot of things to do. We just had, in some ways, the best legislative year we've had, certainly in the last 4 years. We had the biggest increase in investment in education, the first time we've ever gotten any funds for school repair and construction, a big increase in funds for the after-school programs that have been so important to Chicago. We got the new markets initiative that I worked hard on here with Congressman Danny Davis and Speaker Hastert, across party lines, to get more investment into poor areas in America, and a big debt relief initiative for the poor countries. We're doing a lot of stuff here.

And I went to Vietnam. I was able to set aside some more land, preserve it. I'm still working, and I'm going to work to the very end. And of course, I'm trying one last time to make peace in the Middle East. I'm doing the best I can.

Chicago

Ms. Payne. What are you going to miss most about Chicago?

The President. Oh, the people. I love it here. But I'll still come a lot. It's still Hillary's home; a lot of her people are from here. A lot of her friends are here, and I've got the friends of a lifetime here. So I'll still come a lot. And I hope that for the rest of my life I can be a good citizen and really do some good things for America and around the world. So I'll be around. I just have—I fell in love with Chicago

the first time I came here, and nothing ever changed. It just got better.

Richard and William Daley

Ms. Payne. Tell me something about your relationship with the Daley brothers we don't already know. I know it's a good one.

The President. It is good. Well, the mayor I've known for some time, and I knew Bill actually a little before then. I just think Mayor Daley is a great mayor. In addition to being a friend, he's a great mayor. He's not afraid of new ideas. He'll work with anybody. He's always trying to get something done. And he enabled me to be an effective President, because we had these—whether it was welfare reform or housing or economic development or you name it, whatever we were doing, I knew Chicago would be on the cutting edge—community policing, sensible gun safety measures, all of that stuff.

And Bill Daley, of course, and I have been very close, because he was in my Cabinet. He was an absolutely superb Secretary of Commerce. I know he's hated to leave it, but he answered Vice President Gore's call. And what I said tonight was true; we were way behind when he took over, and we won the popular vote, and when they get all the votes counted in Florida, we'll see what happened there. But Bill Daley's got a lot to be proud of, and Chicago should be very proud of him.

Administration Accomplishments

Ms. Payne. What are you most proud of, sir?

The President. I am most proud of the fact that all Americans, not just a few, are better off than they were 8 years ago and that there's a greater sense of community here. I was very worried when I took office that dividing our country was becoming a habit, and a bad one. And I think the country's more united now across racial and income lines and religious lines. And I think we understand we need each other.

So, yes, we're better off economically, but we're a stronger country, too. And I'm very proud of that.

President's Legacy

Ms. Payne. How do you hope Chicagoans and all Americans will remember William Jefferson Clinton?

The President. As a person who did what he said he'd do when he ran for President, who put the American people first, who helped to prepare us for the 21st century, and left the country a little better than he found it.

President's Future Plans

Ms. Payne. Sir, what are you going to do? Are you going to come back and watch a couple Cubs games with us?

The President. I certainly hope so. I hope so. Mr. Sosa says he'll keep inviting me, and I want to do that. I'll stay very active. I now have a United States Senator to support and a daughter to finish educating, so I'm going to go out and make a living. But I'm going to try to spend about half my time on public service, and then as soon as I can do so, I would like to spend my whole life just trying to give back what I've learned and the experiences I've had as President. I think I can do a lot of good for the country and for the world as a citizen. I'm going to do my best.

The Presidency

Ms. Payne. May I just say that I've been so inspired by your drive and your fire. Can you tell the common man a little bit what it's like, from your perspective as a common man from Hope, Arkansas, to be the man sitting inside the Oval Office?

The President. All I can tell you is, it's still the biggest thrill—it's as big a thrill for me today to land on the back lawn of the White House in the helicopter, to walk into the White House and spend the night, to walk over to

the Oval Office every morning. It's as big a thrill for me today as it was on the first day I showed up as President.

I believe in the promise of this country. I believe in the American system. Politics is a rough game, and it's a contact sport, and if you can't take a hit, you shouldn't play. But if you're prepared to pay the price and try to bring people together, the American people can do anything, and we can meet any challenge. We can overcome any obstacle. We can seize any opportunity. And for me, I will leave the White House more idealistic and optimistic about America and its promise and its young people than the day I took office.

Ms. Payne. Listen, I baked you a homemade pound cake, but it's stuck with our makeup artist on the other side of the room. So I'm going to have to send you a fresh one to the White House.

The President. Would you do it? I'd be honored to have it.

Ms. Payne. Absolutely, and I want you to taste it. Everybody in Chicago has had it. Ask Mayor Daley. He gets one every year.

The President. I'm nuts about pound cake. I love it.

Ms. Payne. God bless you. God bless you, sir.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Payne. All the best to your family.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 7:17 p.m. in Grand Ballroom at the Palmer House Hilton Hotel for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago; Gore 2000 campaign director William M. Daley; and Major League Baseball player Sammy Sosa of the Chicago Cubs. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 10. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on the Unveiling of a Statue at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial

January 10, 2001

The President. Calm down.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!